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Good Government; Honesty in Public Office; Equal Justice to All—Special Privileges to None.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS

Abstract of Business Transacted by the Senate and House.

FRIDAY.

The House adopted a number of resolutions pertaining to the employment of committee clerks, the accommodation of committees, etc.; also one providing for a committee on game, under which Speaker Gilchrist appointed the following members to serve on said committee: Messrs. Rosborough, Blanton of Madison, Kilgore, Crawford, Fillingim, DuPont, Knight, Taylor of Hillsborough and Sparkman. Several bills were introduced and referred, the most important of which are noted elsewhere.

A House concurrent resolution providing for the printing and binding in pamphlet form of 1,200 copies of the daily journals, which was adopted on a former day, was reconsidered on motion of Mr. Watson, of Osceola, and tabled; whereupon a resolution was offered by Mr. Watson, and adopted, providing for the printing of 800 copies of the House journal.

MONDAY.

The Senate completed pending business in a short session. Among the resolutions adopted was one by Senator Harris requiring the committee on appropriations to report necessary appropriation bills by May 1. Senator Blount's resolution for a committee to consider the invitation of the Pensacola Chamber of Commerce to visit the U. S. navy was adopted and sent to the House.

In the House, Mr. Noble, of Lake, offered a resolution providing for a committee on insurance, which was adopted; and Mr. Knowles, of Monroe, a resolution requiring the appropriations committee to report bills by May 1; amended to May 10, and adopted. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution, increasing the salaries of supreme justices to \$4,500, and of circuit judges to \$4,000, was offered by Mr. Johnston, of Pasco, and referred. Several bills were introduced and referred, and committee reports submitted and disposed of.

TUESDAY.

Besides the introduction of a few bills the Senate considered and disposed of several resolutions for official visits to State institutions and reports of committees. Among the latter was one asking for the printing of Senator McCreary's bill for a school book commission.

In the House Mr. Pirrong, of Calhoun, introduced a resolution directing the Trustees of the Internal Improvement fund to bring suit against certain railroad and canal companies for indebtedness alleged to be due from them. Mr. Matthews, of Bradford, offered a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution relating to the railroad commission. Reports of committees and messages from the Senate were disposed of in regular course; a few bills passed their second reading, and one or two indefinitely postponed.

WEDNESDAY.

A number of bills were passed on second reading in the Senate, and three on third reading, viz: Designating a police justice in Key West; amending the tax law of Orlando; and providing State aid to certain public schools. The following confirmations in executive session were reported: Chas. B. Parkhill, to be judge of the first judicial circuit; John W. Malone, to be judge of the second judicial circuit; B. H. Palmer, to be judge of the third judicial circuit; R. M. Call, to be judge of the fourth judicial circuit; W. S. Bullock, to be judge of the fifth judicial circuit; J. B. Wall, to be judge of the sixth judicial circuit; Minor S. Jones, to be judge of the seventh judicial circuit; J. T. Willis, to be judge of the eighth judicial circuit.

In the House, a memorial to Congress for the improvement of Blackwater river, in Santa Rosa county, was passed. A number of resolutions concerning accommodations in the Capitol for the use of members were adopted. A resolution requesting Congress to order a survey of Clearwater Harbor and Boca Ceiga bay was adopted; also a resolution providing for a committee of seven Confederate veterans, of the House, and three of the Senate, to present the restored battle flags of the Confederacy, and prepare a program of ceremonies to occur April 20, in a joint session.

A number of bills were introduced, the number now reaching 106. Committee reports and messages from the Senate occupied much of the day, including the appointment of Senators Raney and Massey on the committee to consider the Pensacola invitation; the Speaker appointed Messrs. Avery of Escambia, Blanton of Hernando, and Willis of Hillsborough on the committee. House bill 100, making pension deficiency appropriations for \$140,000, was passed on third reading. Resolutions concerning visiting committees were considered and disposed of. Mr. Avery's bill for separate street cars for negroes was considered on second reading and made a special order for April 14. House bill 63, to prescribe compensation of witnesses and jurors, after the defeat of a motion to indefinitely postpone, was considered on its second reading, amended and ordered engrossed.

THURSDAY.

The Senate received a communication from Governor Broward concerning the restoration of the Florida Confederate battle flags, which was referred to the Committee on State Affairs; and a joint resolution was adopted on the subject, providing for a committee to arrange for the reception of the flags by the Legislature in joint session. A small number of bills were introduced. Senator Zim's bill prohibiting State and municipal officers from accepting free transportation was ordered printed, and a number of bills read the second time. Senator Raney, of the committee, reported progress in the making of arrangements for the visit of the Governor and Cabinet and members of the Legislature to Pensacola, the time having been fixed for Saturday, April 22, returning Monday, 24th.

The report of State Auditor Amos, of examination of certain State offices, was transmitted to the House by the Governor; who also sent in a message concerning the Florida battle flags, duplicating that sent to the Senate. About a dozen bills were introduced. [A brief abstract of the most important bills pending in either house will be made in these columns from time to time.] Mr. Buckman's bill for the protection of sureties, etc., passed third reading. The Speaker appointed the following Select Committee to whom all measures relating to State colleges will be referred: Wartman, Wall, King, Matthews, Wilson of Hernando, Carlton, Girardeau, Harvell and Blanton of Taylor. A bill concerning trials in cases of rape was defeated on third reading. A bill legalizing the incorporation of the town of Lawley was passed on third reading, and a number of bills passed their second reading.

SOME IMPORTANT BILLS.

Among the Senate bills thus far introduced are a number of much more than ordinary importance. Senator Blount's bill appropriating something like \$70,000 for buildings, equipments, etc., for the University of Florida at Lake City, is sufficiently early in time to enable even the most strenuous devotee of economy to scrutinize its features—and kill it if he can. Governor Broward's recommendation that all the State educational institutions of higher learning shall hereafter be sustained by direct special taxation, cannot affect this or similar bills pending at the present session, since such a change of policy, if adopted, would require until the next legislative session to get inaugurated, and appropriation by the Legislature must be relied upon until that time comes.

Dr. Crill's bill providing for a geological survey, introduced the second day of the session, has been received throughout the State with expressions of warm commendation.

Senator McCreary, on Wednesday of last week, introduced a bill providing for a school book commission and a uniform system of text books for the public schools of the State. It has already attracted wide-spread attention, and promises to excite further interest, as it almost sure to encounter determined opposition.

Senator Scott's bill to repeal what is known as the "Flagler divorce law," has created some languid interest; while the measure introduced by Senator Crane to give \$15,000 a year towards the holding of a fair at Tampa is regarded as somewhat out of place. It should have been introduced in the U. S. Congress, which body is in the habit of using public money for such purposes.

On Monday of this week Senator Harris introduced a bill appropriating \$45,000 for certain new buildings for the use of the State government, the newly remodeled Capitol having already proven inadequate in capacity to accommodate the public business; and Senator Gillen presented a resolution for the amendment of the Constitution so as to permit counties to adopt the dispensary plan by selling liquors.

In the House the following are among the bills introduced of especial interest and importance:

By Mr. Avery, of Escambia: To require street car companies to provide separate cars for each race; also a bill regulating the loaning of money on the security of household goods and other personalty. This bill is far-reaching in scope, and has long been needed as a corrective of manifest abuses and injustice to those whose necessities compel them to borrow.

Another bill of Mr. Avery's was one for the repeal of certain laws relating to subscriptions to newspapers, which will be further noticed hereafter.

A bill of Mr. Wells, of Hillsborough, to regulate the issuance of certificates to physicians, will attract the interested attention of the medical fraternity.

Mr. Noble, of Lake, presented a bill providing for a Governor's mansion. Mr. Melton, of Duval, also presented a bill for the same purpose.

Capt. Johnston, of Pasco, a veteran legislator, has offered a number of excellent bills, among them one creating

COLONEL WAILES' CARD.

Believing, as we do, and have always done, that the Welles-Beard claim is a just one, founded upon a valid contract which has been abundantly ratified by the very highest official authority in the State, we take pleasure in reproducing the following correspondence, which explains itself:

Tallahassee Fla., April 10, 1905.

Editor Daily Capital—In your issue of the 8th instant you reproduce an article from the Punta Gorda Herald, from which the following extract is taken:

"Another deduction to be drawn from General Gilchrist's victory is that the Welles claim will not receive very favorable consideration from the present Legislature. Members supporting him knew that in the Legislature of two years ago he was one of the most active opponents of the claim, and by supporting him they virtually took position with him in his opposition. Without entering into details of the argument, it may be stated that General Gilchrist's position is that Col. Welles actually abandoned the prosecution of his contract as entered into with Governor Drew, and accepted service and received pay for the same, under a legislative enactment appropriating \$2,500 to pay for the very work for which Colonel Welles now claims \$103,000."

The Punta Gorda Herald must have misunderstood General Gilchrist, for no intelligent gentleman with any familiarity with my contract could have made such a statement. I was appointed agent for the State of Florida by Governor Drew in 1879; twenty-five years passed from the date I commenced seeking the evidence and filing it before the State received the great sum of \$1,089,158.66. The evidence I filed first with the War Department under an act of Congress, and on which the War Department reported (see Ex. Doc. 203, 47th Congress, 1st session, May 22nd, 1882; amount reported, \$224,648.09). As, under the regulations of the War Department, many items had to be disallowed, and the mutual account, including interest, could not be stated, the Hon. Samuel Pasco succeeded in having an amendment placed on the deficiency act of March 2, 1889, which transferred all papers from the War to the Treasury Department, and there, with the actual proof I was able to file, the accounting officers of the United States Treasury stated the account, and allowed \$281,934.31, being \$77,000 more than was allowed by the War Department. They also stated a mutual account, allowing interest at the rate of 7 per cent on both sides, and the final settlement when the State got the money, July, 1902, was made on the basis of that old statement of account. That statement was made to Congress by the Secretary of the Treasury December 10th, 1889 (see Ex. Doc. No. 65, 51st Congress, 1st session). That statement and settlement was made four years before it was claimed in your article that I am charged with having abandoned the work; and just here let me add that at my request Governor Mitchell appointed my brother to aid in any way he could Florida's Congressmen and Senators in the final passage of the payment of said amount. The additional amount allowed by the Treasury Department over the War Department was on the evidence furnished by me, for it is a well-known fact that Congress never pays a dollar on claims unless they have first been passed upon by some department. My contract was recognized by every Governor after Drew made it (Drew, Bloxham, Fleming, Perry, Mitchell), and my report of what was being done each year was made to each of the Governors, and by them sent to the Legislature. The contract, and my work in trying to obtain settlement, was fully investigated by the State Senate in 1883 (see Senate proceedings, 13th session). No one ever questioned the contract until the State had the money safely in its treasury. I have never received one cent on that contract, notwithstanding the large amount I paid out. The records all here as taken by the Senate committee of the last Legislature will bear out this statement, and the statement of the witnesses then, so well known in this State for honesty and integrity, Hons. W. D. Bloxham, Charles Dougherty, Samuel Pasco, Robert Bullock, R. H. M. Davidson, Geo. P. Raney, Geo. R. Fairbanks, the gentlemen who represented the State in Washington, and here in their official capacity, and knew of the service rendered by me.

Again I am ready to appear before any committee, and can satisfy any honest man of the work done by me by which the State obtained this large sum of money, and I only ask simple justice and my proportion of that money, which this State has had in her treasury since July 1, 1902, without the expenditure by the State, at any time, or in any way, of one dollar.

As by the publication of that article you have given notice to the State that General Gilchrist has been made Speaker for the purpose of defeating a settlement with me under my contract, I hope you will advise, through your columns, whether that statement was made with General Gilchrist's endorsement or approval.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,
S. I. Welles.

Among the applicants for legislative plums "left over" from the general scrimmage of the first week, are two well-known newspaper men who finally landed soft committee clerkships, viz: Messrs. Pierre d'Arcy Pratt, of Seabreeze, and B. F. Kirk, of Brookville.

Hon. Scott Loftin, county solicitor of Escambia, who has spent several days in the city, has returned to his Pensacola home.

Rev. Luther S. Hutchens, of West Virginia, the well-known evangelist, author and lecturer, will deliver his famous lecture, "The Pitfalls of Life," at the opera house Friday evening, April 21st.

When the Legislature comes to make up the appropriation bill it should put in enough money to improve the Capitol grounds. The State Capitol and its surroundings should be the pride of every Floridian, and they cannot be made so without money.—Miami Metropolis.

Defects in the bill providing for the State schools should be discovered before the Legislature adjourns. When too late, two years ago, to correct the mischief, Governor Jennings "discovered" that the school appropriation was unconstitutional.—Bartow Courier-Informant.

While the Legislature has its hand in, amending the Constitution to raise salaries, it would not be amiss to add a mite to the salary of the Governor, and, too, it is perfectly safe to adopt these resolutions, for the people will be given the opportunity to vote on the questions before they go into effect.—Times-Union.

General Albert Gilchrist, Speaker of the House of Representatives, will make, we predict, one of the ablest and most satisfactory presiding officers who has ever wielded the Speaker's gavel. And if we mistake not, there are other and higher honors than Speaker of the House in store for Speaker Gilchrist in the future of Florida politics.—Pensacola Journal.

WOODVILLE ITEMS.

Rev. J. T. Coleman went to Crawfordville Saturday morning to attend the quarterly meeting which was held in the Methodist church at that place Saturday and Sunday. He returned Monday.

Hon. J. L. Robinson spent Saturday and Sunday with his family.

Rev. John Saunders, of Quincy, preached at the Baptist church Sunday. There were services on Saturday, also, but we did not learn who the preacher was.

Mr. Snipes, foreman of Mr. Hall's mill here, met with a painful accident last Friday afternoon. His right foot was caught between two large logs and but for the fact that he had a heavy in his hand with which he caught one of the logs, would probably have been seriously hurt. At present he is able to walk around with the aid of one crutch.

Mr. Durance, of Medart, Wakulla county, was in the village Saturday.

Mr. B. F. Isler, of Bradfordville, came down Saturday afternoon, and returned Sunday to his home, accompanied by his wife, who had been visiting relatives here.

Mrs. L. Maxwell, of Tallahassee, is attending to Mr. Robinson's store during the absence in the Capital City, of the latter.

It was a highly esteemed privilege of the writer to attend Miss Tucker's Bible readings in the Methodist church, Tallahassee, Sunday. We believe that she is accomplishing a great deal of good.

Supt. E. B. Eppes visited the Woodville school Monday and seemed very much gratified at the interest taken in the school by the patrons, as was attested by the large number of pupils present.

Opera House.

The Charles King Dramatic Company will play a two nights' engagement at Munro's Opera House next Monday and Tuesday, April 17 and 18. They will present "Wolves of New York" and "East Lynne."

This company will be remembered by many who witnessed several excellent performances during their engagement here last December.

The company has made a complete tour of the State since then, and the press of various places pronounce them among the best of the season.

The play for Monday night is a sensational melodrama, bringing into its plot a varied number of interesting characters, calculated to afford a field of amusement for everybody. "East Lynne" is too well-known to admit of comment, but this claims a cast especially adapted to the characters of this masterpiece of emotional drama.

Tickets are now on sale at Wight & Burns.

A State school book system of uniform text books; one providing for the payment of the actual traveling expenses of circuit judges while holding court in their respective circuits, and a resolution for the amendment of the Constitution by increasing the compensation of supreme court justices to \$5,000 per year, and of circuit judges to \$4,000 per year.

A bill by Mr. Dorman, of Suwannee, to regulate the registration of electors will attract much attention; so will the bill of Mr. Bryan, of Washington, to forbid collectors to receive poll taxes from any but the persons owing the same.

Quite a large number of bills on the subject of vagrancy have been introduced by different members, all of which will receive due consideration from the appropriate committees.

MESSAGE OF THE GOVERNOR.

A Few More Comments Upon Some of Its Salient Features.

Concerning Commissioner Bullin's most comprehensive official report, the Governor says: "I especially call your attention to the great amount of very valuable information contained in the carefully compiled report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, the greatly increased value of farm products for the past two years, as compared to the value of farm products in his report of two years ago, and much other valuable statistical information concerning our industries and the resources of our State, and their great value even in their undeveloped condition." Strange to say, we find in the message no reference to the excellent handbook of the State recently prepared by the Commissioner, nor any recommendation for its republication. Nor is there a line in the entire document upon the subject of immigration—a topic which has recently excited public attention to an unusual degree.

The Governor recommends several amendments to the primary election law, including the following: Making the calling of primary elections mandatory, instead of optional, upon the part of committees; filing sworn statements of election expenditures by the candidates; severe penalties for miscounting votes by inspectors and clerks, and for bribery or intimidation of voters, and the payment by counties of the expenses of primary elections.

The first and last of these four recommendations are original with Governor Broward. The first is eminently apt and reasonable; the last of very doubtful expediency and still more doubtful justice. The second and third are practically identical with two recommendations alleged to have been made by the State executive committee. The second is one to which nearly every citizen can give cordial assent, and the third is equally expedient and necessary, save that the matter of arbitrarily exempting one party to a crime from its lawful consequences in order that the other party may be punished is a matter which must, finally, be left for the courts to handle, as to whether it can be lawfully done by the enactment of a statute.

One of the most startlingly interesting sections of the message is that relating to the subject of life insurance. In effect, the Governor advocates the establishment of a State insurance company or department, with a view to provide protection to the people by means of life insurance, so as to prevent the sending abroad of large sums of money annually to pay premiums.

Summarizing the volume of life insurance business transacted in Florida during the past twelve years, the Governor shows that Florida patrons of foreign insurance concerns have paid out in premiums not less than \$10,165,676.83 (an average of \$847,139.74 per annum), while the losses paid during the same period upon \$80,681,807 insurance in force amounted to only \$3,130,211.23, or about 30 per cent of the total outlay.

In order to correct this condition, the Governor recommends legislation to "establish a life insurance business conducted by the State," and suggests as the outline of a plan which might be perfected and adopted, that "blanks could be furnished by the Comptroller and sent to the various bonded county officers, they to fill out blanks for applicants and refer them to the proper physician or physicians for examination, the physician to make his report to the county officer sending him the applicant, said application and report of physician, together with the premium, to be forwarded by the said county officer to the Comptroller, he to audit the same, and, if found correct, turn the money and papers over to the Treasurer. Upon the receipt of the money and papers, the Treasurer shall file with the Secretary of State the application and his receipt for the premium, and the Secretary of State shall thereupon issue a policy, to be valid when signed by the Governor, and forward the same to the applicant."

Before attempting definite action upon this unusual proposition, it will doubtless become the province of the committee to whom it may be referred to inaugurate a cautious and exhaustive investigation concerning the actual cost of conducting the business, the number and compensation of additional employees necessary to its transaction, the length of time requisite to supplant the companies now entitled to do business in the State, and the actual experience of other States, if any, that have tried the experiment.

South Florida has fared pretty well at the hands of the new Legislature, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House both coming from this section. As there is nothing but the making of good laws to attract the attention of the body, and it begins with the utmost harmony, it is only reasonable to expect very excellent results from the session.—Tampa Times.